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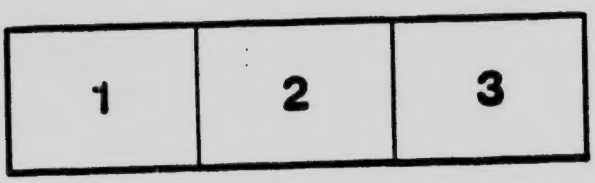

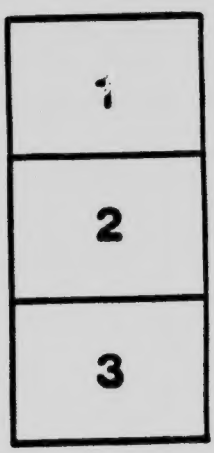

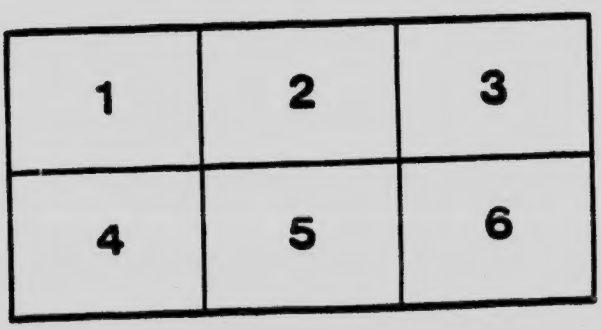

Walthall Rural High School 209

Selections from the Idylls

THE COMING OF ARTHUR
THE HOLY GRAIL

TENNYSON

With Annotations by
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THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King,
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat

To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolflike men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the King
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made

Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so return'd.
For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war: for most of these,
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying, 'Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the King;
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything

Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—
When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.
And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knighthood, threw the kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudias, and Clariance of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake
Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'
So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.

He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'
Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—'How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and call'd
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
'Sir King, there be but two old men that know:
And each is twice as old as I; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys

Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me:
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the King said,
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorloïs,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King—

'Sir, there be many rumours on this head:
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven: but my belief
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time

The prince and warrior Gorloïs he, that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war:
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness: afterwards,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack; but now,
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"
A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his craft,
And while the people clamour'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men

Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
So many those that hate him, and so strong,
So few his knights, however brave they be—
Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crown'd on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round
With large, divine, and comfortable words,
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King:
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-colour, vert and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,

But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister;' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I;'
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd the King.
She answer'd, 'These be secret things,' and sign'd
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw:
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard; the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, 'What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorloïs, and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this King is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world."'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true:
He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,

And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be King.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;
And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,

And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Drop to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried "The King!
Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same child," he said,
"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told." And saying this the seer
Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be question'd any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas—
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

'"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours;'
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen;—and watch'd him from the gates:
And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a noble time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,
The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns
A voice as of the waters, while the two
Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love:
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!'
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,

'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine
Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood,
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;
Then while they paced a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
Blow thro' the living world—"Let the King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim'd their tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay:' so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

THE HOLY GRAIL

From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion cross?'

'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail!—I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder—as to things without I mean—
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd Percivale.
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;

And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!

"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might it come
To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay," said he,
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and prayed
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armour, Galahad.
"God made thee good as thou art beautiful,"
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight: and none,
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,

And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,
"No man could sit but he should lose himself:"
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,

And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the King,
Was not in hall: for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help: for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest: so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot; whence the King
Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the roofs
Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-smoke!
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt."
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King."

'And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and how—
O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

'Ho to this hall full quickly rode the King,
In horr - lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Drear :e, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
I. .emorseful folds of rolling fire.

And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all:
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and sear'd,
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest: and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he cried,
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow."
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been here,
My King, thou would'st have sworn." "Yea, yea," said he,
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?"

'"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light.
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

'Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."
'"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

'Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'"

"'Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)
"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales"
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he, "but men
With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet

The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

'But when the next day brake from under ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling "God speed!" but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,

Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our sins."
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names; and never yet
Had heaven appeared so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This quest is not for thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, "This quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once

Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
"Rest here;" but when I touch'd her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst,
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the ploughshare in the field,
The ploughman left his ploughing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere:
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind;
And seemed to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top, a city wall'd: the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

'"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;

But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew

One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-courses—
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?

And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any Rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for in sooth
These ancient books—and they would win thee—teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,

Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,

And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away:
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Percivale:
'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it;
Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower:
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing: yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.

And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and tongue:
"We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth.

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
To find thine own first love once more—to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
None of your knights?'

'Yea so,' said Percivale:
'One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon:
And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him, and he me,
And each made joy of either; then he ask'd,
"Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lancelot?—Once,"
Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me—mad,
And maddening what he rode: and when I cried,
'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way.'
So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them; to Bors
Beyond the rest: he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest:
If God would send the vision, well: if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven: and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
And this high Quest as at a simple thing:
Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's words—
A mocking fire: "what other fire than he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?"
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
Over him till by miracle—what else?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move: and thro' the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
Still as the day was loud; and thro' the gap

The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round—
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone: "And then to me, to me,"
Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me—
In colour like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.'

To whom the monk: 'And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?'

Then answer'd Percivale: 'And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again
But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd

The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the daïs-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King,
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bad me hail,
Saying, "A welfare in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings;
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now—the Quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for thee?"

'"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not for me;
For I was much awearied of the Quest:
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,

And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;" and Bors,
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it;" and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the King, "my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for thee?"

'"Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot, with a groan;
"O King!"—and when he paused, methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail

They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
That I would work accordiug as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away;
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat,
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;
And in my madness to myself I said,
'I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin.'
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,

A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between;
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
'Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away—
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around

Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd; and this Quest was not for me.'

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words,—
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King,—
Well, I will tell thee: "O King, my liege," he said,
"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

'"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

'"Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness, but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

'"And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a tithe—
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.

'"And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done; but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,

This air that smites his forehead is not air,
But vision —yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again : ye have seen what ye have seen.

'So spake the King : I knew not all he meant.'

—TENNYSON.

NOTES

TENNYSON

The Life of Tennyson.—Tennyson was born in 1809 in the little village of Somersby in Lincolnshire. He was one of a family of twelve, seven boys and five girls, the children of Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, the village rector. He received his early education in the village school and at the grammar school at Louth, but his later boyhood was spent at home, reading, studying, and rambling in the neighbourhood. At the age of nineteen he went to Cambridge University, but left three years later without graduating. In 1832 he published a volume of poems, but because of some unfavourable criticism he published nothing more for ten years. Two volumes which appeared in 1842, however, firmly established his reputation as a poet. His next important work was *The Princess*, which was published in 1847; but it was misunderstood, and added little to his reputation at the time. The year 1850 was an important year in Tennyson's life. In that year he published *In Memoriam*, and in the same year he was appointed poet-laureate. In this year also he was married to Miss Emily Sellwood. For three years they lived in Twickenham, then a suburb of London, but in 1853 they removed to Farringford in the Isle of Wight. This was the poet's home for sixteen years. Then in 1869 he built a residence at Aldworth, near Haslemere in Surrey, where he lived for the remainder of his life. In the meantime *Maud* was published in 1855, and in 1869 four of the *Idylls* appeared. In 1869 four others were added, but it was not until 1885 that the series of twelve idylls was complete. In 1884 he accepted a baronetcy, and was henceforth known as Lord Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford. The latter part of his life was devoted very largely to the production of dramatic poetry, but he also produced some of his finest lyrics in his later years. He died in October, 1892, and was buried in the Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey.

Literary Style.—Tennyson's literary style is best described by the term "ornate". He is at his best in those subjects which lend themselves to pictorial effect and richness of imagery; and he

carefully embellishes and elaborates his poems down to the minutest details. He is a lyric and idyllic poet, and he excels in those passages which require delicacy of touch and the expression of finer shades of feeling. Few poets have equalled him in the command of graceful and felicitous expression and in the power of producing exquisite musical effects. In thought and sentiment Tennyson represents the conservative middle class in England, with their respect for law and order and their adherence to the established order of things.

The Arthurian Legends.—The Arthurian legends are very old. Much of the romance that is associated with King Arthur may be traced to early Celtic myths. It is believed that there was a Celtic warrior who lived during the time of the Saxon invasion (450-510) and fought against the invaders; but little else is known of him. Gradually, however, there grew up numerous legends and traditions with Arthur as the central figure; and early in the twelfth century the story of the Round Table came into existence. During the following centuries many different versions of the story appeared; and in the year 1470 an Englishman named Sir Thomas Malory published a volume entitled *Morte D'Arthur* in which he told the story of the Round Table as found in various legends. Tennyson drew his material for his *Idylls* almost entirely from Malory's account. In the story of *The Holy Grail*, however, he has drawn very largely on his own imagination for his details. The portrayal of the monk Ambrosius, the story of the quest of Sir Bors, and the utterances of Arthur, are, for example, almost entirely Tennyson's own.

The Idylls of the King. An Idyll is a poem of a highly decorative, pictorial character, containing a simple story of pastoral or primitive life. Very frequently, too, the story contains a moral lesson, or is capable of a spiritual interpretation. Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, for example, tells the story of an "old order" of things in England; but behind the story there lies a spiritual meaning; and Tennyson himself speaks of it as an "old imperfect tale. new-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul". But in general, the reading of an idyll gives greater pleasure if we do not look too closely at the allegorical or spiritual meaning, but are content to enjoy the story for its own sake.

The Idylls of the King consists of twelve books, in which the story is told of the rise and decline of the Round Table from the coming of Arthur until his death. The first of the idylls, *The Coming of Arthur*, tells of the founding of the Order of the Round Table, with Arthur as king. The second idyll, *Gareth and Lynette*, shows the Round Table at its best, before any taint of sin had entered into it. In the third and fourth idylls, *The Marriage of Geraint*, and *Geraint and Enid* there is a whisper of Lancelot's guilty love for Queen Guinevere, which is finally to prove the ruin of the Round Table. The next two idylls, *Balin and Balan*, and *Merlin and Vivien* show that the evil influence of Lancelot's sin is already making itself felt; and in the latter idyll the enchanter Merlin falls a prey to the wiles of Vivien. In *Lancelot and Elaine*, Lancelot has an opportunity to cast aside his sin, but he fails to do so and his failure brings disaster. In the eighth idyll *The Holy Grail*, the crisis is reached. In the midst of the growing corruption of the Court, there comes a sudden revival of enthusiasm for spiritual things. But the revival is not productive of lasting results; for, although Lancelot in his "madness" wrestles with his sin, he fails to throw it aside, and instead of purifying and strengthening the Round Table, the quest of the Holy Grail has the effect of weakening it still further. The three following idylls *Pelleas and Ettarre*, *The Last Tournament*, and *Guinevere* tell the story of the final decay of the Round Table; and in the last idyll of all, *The Passing of Arthur*, "the whole Round Table is dissolved", and Arthur passes away to "the island-valley of Avilion".

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

The Coming of Arthur forms the introduction to the Idylls as a whole, just as *The Passing of Arthur* forms the conclusion. In such an introduction it is necessary for the poet to explain to the reader who Arthur is and under what circumstances he became King. He must tell also who Guinevere is, how Arthur chanced to see her, and how at length she became Queen; and since the Idylls have to do with the story of the Round Table, he must also tell the reader how the order of the Round Table came to be founded and what its character and purposes may be.

Of these various threads of plot in the idyll, the most interesting and romantic is the story of King Arthur and Guinevere; and the poet uses this story as a framework for the idyll as a whole. When Leodogran appeals to the King for help, the poet has an excuse for telling how the land had been laid waste. When Arthur asks Leodogran to give him his daughter Guinevere to be his wife, Leodogran makes enquiry as to his right to the throne; and when the marriage of King Arthur and Guinevere takes place, the poet tells us how "King Arthur's knighthood sang before the King", and how at length he "overcame the heathen hordes and made a realm and reign'd".

But although it is used as the framework for the narrative, the story of King Arthur and Guinevere is not the most important element in the idyll. The most significant portion of the poem is that part in which Leodogran attempts to solve the mystery of King Arthur's birth. The inquiry as to who King Arthur really is, occupies more than half the idyll; and when considered merely as narrative, it is perhaps less interesting to the reader than the other portions of the poem. But the real reason why the question of King Arthur's birth is dealt with at so great a length in the poem becomes evident when the spiritual interpretation of the idyll is taken into consideration; and in the light of this interpretation the whole passage is read with a new interest.

Spiritual interpretation. Throughout the Idylls, Arthur is evidently intended to represent the spiritual side of life, the aspirations and ideals of mankind, in contrast with the lower human impulses and passions. But spiritual aspiration by itself can accomplish nothing, and unless our ideals can take practical form in everyday life we are merely "vext with waste dreams." It is only when the spiritual Arthur is joined with the human Guinevere that they can together,

> Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
> And power on this dead world to make it live.

In building up the spiritual life, the intellect and imagination, represented by Merlin, is constantly called into play, and it is through the agency of Merlin that Camelot, which represents human institutions and human culture, has been built.

When in the changing order of events a new spiritual truth, or new ideal, comes to mankind, it is naturally looked upon with suspicion, and those who still cling to the old order of things, or who live merely for the gratification of sense, refuse to accept it. When Arthur becomes King, Uther's knights band themselves together to war against him. And even by those who do accept it, the new spiritual principle is viewed in different ways. There are those who look upon it merely as a natural outgrowth of the old order of things,—such matter-of-fact souls as Ulfius and Brastias and Bedivere, who have a straight-forward explanation of every new spiritual experience and see nothing mysterious in it. There are others who, like Bellicent, have no clear idea of how the new spiritual truth has originated, but who find it, nevertheless, helpful and comforting, and have confidence that it will prevail. And there are still others, represented, in the poem, by Bleys, to whom each new truth is of mysterious and supernatural origin, and who receive it as such. Amid all these conflicting explanations what is the real truth? For answer we have only the "riddling triplets" of Merlin, who tells us that no one knows, and that what might be a true answer to one is untrue in the experience of another. In the end the riddle of King Arthur's birth is still unsolved, and after all his enquiry Leodogran is still unconvinced and still doubtful whether he should "answer yea or nay." But Merlin has prophesied that Arthur will

> Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
> Till these and all men hail him for their king;

and in the dream of Leodogran "the King stood out in heaven crown'd." For us, as for Leodogran, there is no need for further inquiry or assurance. It matters little what are the sources of human aspiration and ideals so long as we are convinced that truth will triumph in the end.

1. **Cameliard.** This and other names of places occurring in the poem are taken from the old Arthurian romances.

8. **the heathen host.** The Saxons.

13-4. **Aurelius, Uther.** These kings are mentioned in the old chronicles.

17. **Table Round.** The order of the Round Table, founded by King Arthur, is said to have taken its name from a great "round table" at which Arthur and his knights sat at meat.

31. They too would go on all fours in imitation of her.

34. The Romans withdrew from Britain about 411 A.D.

35. **Caesar's eagle.** The eagle was the Roman emblem.

38-9. Note the harsh imitative sounds in these lines.

50. **The golden symbol.** The golden dragon, the symbol of sovereignty among the Britons. See line 374.

54. **bare.** Uncovered. His visor (the armour for the face) was lifted.

72. **Goriois.** See ll. 185-6.
Anton. See ll. 221-2.

75. The birth of love is likened to the birth of a child.

81. **What happiness.** How little happiness.

82-3. The stars, instead of shining clearly, seem to shudder as if they too were unhappy; and the earth sounds hollow because in his loneliness life seems to him to be vain and empty.

94. **as he speaks.** Malory, whose "tale" Tennyson is re-telling.

96. **pavilions.** Tents.

97-9. These lines are symbolical. Under the influence of new ideals and new truths our vision becomes clearer, and we have a keener insight into b[illegible] worldly and spiritual things.

100. **set his banner broad.** [illegible]furled it.

102. **shrilling unto blood.** Their piercing sounds were a sign that bloodshed would follow.

103. **The long-lanced battle.** The army with their long lances.
let. Made, caused.

106. **Went swaying.** Wherever the King went, his forces prevailed; elsewhere they suffered defeat.

120. **Ho!** The word commonly used as a call to cease fighting.

132. **God in man.** Man's word is to be trusted as the expression of a Godlike quality in him.

142. saving. Except.

160-2. Leodogran is, of course, sarcastic, for the chamberlain has given him no help.

168. And reason in the chase. They had good reason to chase the cuckoo. Why?

178-82. Note the symbolical meaning. These are always those who are hostile to new truths and higher ideals, while there are others who welcome them.

182. belief. Bedivere does not complete his sentence, and there is no predicate for "belief."

183. so. If.

184. Some such word as "listen" must be supplied after "Sir".

186. Tintagil. A village, with a castle now partly in ruins, on the northern coast of Cornwall.

194. the bright dishonor. This is a figure of speech known as "oxymoron."

201. to call to. For her to call to for help.

210. all. Quite, wholly.

211. all. Just.

214. his hour. His time to become king.

247. Unless the king is the rightful heir, he will soon lose the support of his people.

252. body enow. Strength enough.

261. strait. Strict.

262-5. The revelation of great truths by which our lives must be governed, affects people in different ways. Some are filled with awe, some are flushed with a new enthusiasm, while others are for the moment dazed and incapable of action.

267. large. Gracious.
comfortable. Comforting.

270. a momentary likeness. For the moment all were inspired by the same lofty ideals.

274. vert and azure. Green and blue. Terms used in heraldry.

275. three fair queens. Faith, hope, and charity.

279. mage. The magician.

282. the Lady of the Lake. Symbolizing the inner spiritual life.

283. Our deeper spiritual instincts may be a source of strength and comfort.

284. samite. Silk interwoven with gold and silver threads.

285. cross-hilted sword. Excalibur, which is described in ll. 297-304. The hilt was shaped in the form of a cross.

286-7. a mist of incense. Suggesting the reverence with which she is regarded. Incense is expressive of adoration.

289. of the waters. Awe-inspiring. See Revelations XVI. 5.

290. In times of trouble she brings peace to men's hearts.

294. Excalibur. The name means "cut-steel". It symbolizes the power of a new truth to overcome the forces that oppose it, until it is at length accepted.

298. elfin Urim. The Urim were jewels in the breastplate of the High Priest. See Exodus XXVIII, 15-30. They are said to be "elfin", or fairy-like, because they are so cunningly engraved.

301-4. From the earliest times mankind has had spiritual aspirations; but the time comes when the older ideals of life have lost their force, and the sword must be thrown away.

318. let them be. Leave them to themselves.

333-5. She is arguing that if Arthur had been really her brother, her mother, Ygerne, would not have spoken in this way.

362. According to the old belief, the fairies sometimes carried children away and left in their places others who at length, as they became older, grew into misshapen wizened elves.

379. Every ninth wave, according to a popular fancy, is larger than the rest.

401. of old time. That have come down from olden times.

402-10. Merlin says, in substance, that no one knows what the truth really is. What the young man believed to be true

turns out to be false; and even the judgment of old age cannot be trusted. What appears true to one man, appears false to another, no matter how it is expressed, whether in its plainest form or clothed in figurative and symbolic language. The sun and rain produce the rainbow, but although it is beautiful it is unsubstantial and fades away. We can no more know what the truth is than we can tell how the blossom, produced by the same sun and rain, has come into being.

420. Men's ideals may change with the changing age, but though they "pass" they will "come again" in newer forms.

427-39. These lines give, in symbolical form a picture of human progress towards higher spiritual ideals. Progress from lower to higher levels is suggested by the "slope of land". The ideal towards which the race is striving is not always clearly seen. It is, indeed, only a phantom, some fancied good that the future holds for us, "now looming and now lost." We have made progress towards the ideal only through fierce conflict and through human suffering; and our very struggles have helped still more to obscure our view. Some rare souls there have always been, who have continued to listen to the voice calling mankind to higher things and these men have tried to point the way for others. But the majority of mankind refuse to recognize changing conditions, and blindly follow lower impulses and yield to lower passions.

476-7. The "great lords from Rome" stand for the old order of things, which is always scornful of the new.

483. **the living world.** All Nature, filled with the new life of springtime, is in sympathy with their purposes.

488. That is to say, the King's purposes are the result of divine inspiration.

511. **your Roman wall.** The great wall of Agricola between the Forth and the Clyde, built as a barrier against the incursions of the Picts and Scots.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that the first four lines form a good beginning for the poem? Give your reasons.

2. How, according to the poem, did the land of Cameliard come to be a "wilderness"? What striking details does the poet introduce, in ll. 20-33, to show that it was "waste"?

3. Why did the Lords and Barons of the realm make war on Arthur? Aurelius and Uther had already failed to overthrow them. How was it that King Arthur succeeded in winning the victory?

4. Explain, "Worse than the wolves" (l. 33); "between the man and beast we die" (l. 45); "looking downward as he past" (l. 55); " Made broad pathways" (ll. 60-61).

5. The criticism has been made that there is nothing in King Arthur's speech (ll. 77-93) to show that he is really in love with Guinevere. What reasons does he give in this speech for wishing to make her his wife?

6. King Arthur's speech (ll. 77-93) has a symbolic meaning. Explain it.

7. By what means has the poet succeeded in enlisting the reader's admiration for King Arthur in the first part of the poem (ll. 1-138)?

8. When Sir Bedivere is questioned by Leodogran concerning King Arthur's birth he puts his reply into the form of a narrative. What was his belief? (See l. 182.)

9. Why, according to Sir Bedivere, did the lords of the realm not wish to have Arthur for their king? Under these circumstances how was it that Merlin was able to have him crowned King?

10. Leodogran, in conversation with Sir Bedivere and Bellicent, makes use of three striking comparisons". What are the comparisons to which the quotation refers? Show the point of the comparison in each case.

11. Of what are each of the following symbolical: the three fair queens (l. 275); mage Merlin (l. 279); the Lady of the Lake (l. 282); Excalibur (l. 294)?

12. Explain the symbolism of ll. 290-293, and ll. 300-304.

13. What answers were given by Bedivere, Bellicent, and Bleys (as reported by Bellicent), to the enquiry of Leodogran regarding King Arthur's birth? If King Arthur is taken to represent the spiritual side of man's nature, what does each of these explanations signify?

14. Point out one characteristic of each of the following as portrayed in the poem: Guinevere, Merlin, Gawain, Modred, Bedivere, Bellicent.

15. In l. 412, Bellicent says to Leodogran, "Fear not to give the King thine only child." What reason does she give? Why does Leodogran still doubt (l. 426)? Why does he at last appear to decide so quickly (l. 443-5)?

16. In the dream of Leodogran, explain the significance of the slope of land, the haze, the phantom king, the one who pointed toward the voice.

17. Point out the passages in the poem that convey the idea that Arthur was divinely inspired.

18. On what different occasions are Lancelot and Guinevere, respectively, mentioned in the story? What impression does the poet intend to give us of each?

19. In ll. 446-474, what is expressed or suggested by each of the following: "in stainless white" (l. 445); "Roll'd incense" (l. 463); "A voice as of the waters" (l. 464); "with drooping eyes" (l. 468); "make the world other" (ll. 471-2); "the boundless purpose" (l. 474).

20. Point out details in the passage, ll. 446-480, that are intended to suggest, (*a*) the splendor of the scene, (*b*) the enthusiasm of the knighthood.

21. "In the song of the knighthood the ideas are expressed in a natural sequence, and the mood becomes more exalted as the song proceeds to its climax." Justify this statement.

22. (*a*) Do you think that the poem would have been as effective if it had ended with l. 501? (*b*) What is the poet's object in introducing the "Great Lords from Rome"? (*c*) The thought contained in the last five lines of the poem has already been expressed in ll. 16-19. Why does the poet repeat it?

THE HOLY GRAIL

The Holy Grail. According to legend, the Holy Grail is the cup or bowl from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, and which was used by Joseph of Arimathæa to receive the blood from Christ's wounds when his body was removed from the cross. The Grail was taken to England by Joseph of Arimathæa, and at his death it remained in the keeping of his descendants. But in the course of time, owing to the impurity of life of its guardians, the Grail disappeared; and thereafter it appeared only to those whose lives were free from sin. The search for the Grail accordingly came at length to symbolize the search for spiritual purity. The reference to

"the Siege Perilous" in *The Holy Grail* makes it clear at the outset that for any one who would seek the Holy Grail the first requisite was that he should "lose himself" in order to "find himself"; and this idea of self-renunciation is kept before the reader continuously throughout the story.

As a result of the newly-awakened enthusiasm, as described in the beginning of the poem, "many among the knights" undertook the quest; but the Idyll relates in detail the experiences of only four;—Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, Sir Bors, and Sir Lancelot, and these four knights represent four different types.

Sir Galahad was a "maiden knight" who knew no sin, and to him the Grail revealed itself without any inner conflict. To his pure mind temptation never comes. He has "found himself" without a struggle, and the Grail, invisible to others, is present with him night and day. Such souls are of the ideal type, too pure and good, it seems, for earth; and he is translated at once to the spiritual city, and so is "lost to the Table Round". At no time, indeed, does Sir Galahad seem to be a tangible creature of flesh and blood, and he is too abstract, too spiritual, too far above the weaknesses of human nature, to appeal strongly to the sympathies of the reader. It is "the low sun" that "makes the colour."

It is the second knight, Sir Percivale, who tells the story of the Quest, and his own experiences are narrated in detail. He failed to see the vision at first because, although contrite at heart, he had not "true humility," and even in his contrite moods, "self" remained uppermost. But he was at length purified through association with the pure Sir Galahad, and the vision came to him.

To Sir Bors, the third of the knights, the vision came unlooked for. He was "so clouded with his grief and love " for Lancelot, that "small heart was his after the Holy Quest"; but because he "lost himself" in his generous devotion to Sir Lancelot he too caught a fleeting glimpse of the Grail.

The last of the knights of whom the Idyll tells is Sir Lancelot. His spiritual strength was sapped by the sin which, in spite of his struggle, he continued to cherish; but he too caught a partial glimpse of the Grail,—such a vision of spiritual perfection as a sinful man might gain in moments of passionate effort to throw aside his sin.

But Sir Lancelot's struggle was unavailing, and when the fire of his enthusiasm had died away, he returned again to his sinful love, as before. The Quest was not for him. His struggle with his sin is, in reality, the central point, the crisis, in the story of the Round Table. If Lancelot had thrown aside his guilty sin, the Round Table, through his example and his renewed strength, might still have been saved; but he failed to do so, and through his weakness all was lost.

In direct contrast with the ideals of those knights who went on the Quest, and who sought for spiritual purity in self-renunciation, is the ideal of King Arthur, who saw that the first duty of the king and of his knights alike was to perform the commonplace duties of daily life. King Arthur is the real hero of the Idyll. He is not less visionary than his knights, but with him the daily task, the plowing of the allotted field, must come before the vision. Even the monk Ambrosius, with his ministry to the peasants in his "thorpe", though he sees no visions and has no spiritual aspirations beyond his vague unsatisfied longings and his yearning for affection, is in his own way as true a "servant of God" as is Sir Percivale. The search for spiritual purity, Tennyson seems to say, is in itself a thing to be desired; but the truest spiritual satisfaction is to be attained not in pursuit of visionary ideals but through the performance of the duty that lies nearest us. There are only a few Galahads and Percivales; and, for the most part, those who give themselves up to the pursuit of visions are "lost in a quagmire". It is Sir Bors, who loses himself in devotion to others, Arthur, who spends his life in righting human wrongs, and the humble Ambrosius, whose highest service consists in "lulling random squabbles when they rise", whose example it is safest to follow.

5. **cowl.** The hood worn by monks.

6. **abbey.** Here, monastery.

7. **Camelot.** The capital of King Arthur's realm, sometimes identified with Winchester.

10-1. **wrought . . a way.** Worked his way into his affections.

13. **yew tree.** A European variety of evergreen.

14. **cloisters.** The covered passage looking out upon the garden or court yard of the monastery,—and hence, the monastery itself.

15. **smoke.** The cloud of pollen dust resembling smoke.

21. **pale.** Boundary.

29. **earthly passion crost.** Disappointment in love.

33. **heats.** Passions, eager desires.

34. **jousts.** Tournaments.

35. **the spiritual strength within us.** Strong emotions.

38-9. Spiritually (in Heaven's eyes) we are fresh and full of life, but we are too much out of touch with the life of the world outside. The speaker compares life to a tree.

41. **refectory.** The dining-hall of the monastery.

45. **what phantom?** Why do you call it a phantom?

48. **land of Aromat.** The town of Arimathæa, not far from Jerusalem.

50. **Moriah.** The hill in Jerusalem where the temple stood.

52. **Glastonbury.** A town in Somerset, said to have been founded by Joseph of Arimathæa.

winter thorn. A kind of hawthorn which, according to legend grew from Joseph's staff.

61. **Arviragus.** An early British king, who is said to have reigned from 44 to 72 A.D.

63. **wattles.** Flexible twigs used in weaving.

70. **to-day.** In these later days.

70-2. She was a holy maid, if her continued prayers are any proof.

75. **glanced, etc.** Turned aside, and fixed itself upon spiritual things.

80. Rumours of the sinfulness of the people. "Strange", because it is so much at variance with the ideals of the Round Table. See ll. 89-91.

97. **I know not.** That is, "I think it might."

104. More wonderful than any one had known them to be.

118. **with beatings in it.** As if pulsing with the blood of Christ.

128. **heal'd.** Of its sins.

137. **dubb'd.** Named. "To dub" is, literally, to strike with the sword in knighting.

143-5. A suggestion of mystery surrounding the birth of Sir Galahad.

147. That gape for flies. They are eager for gossip or scandal, like birds with open beak, flying up and down in search of flies.

we know not whence they come. No one knows who they are, and hence they cannot be relied upon.

148. lewd. Licentious.

wanderingly. Lancelot was devoted to Guinevere, and his affections never wandered to others.

161. break thro' all. Overcome all difficulties and dangers.

162. the spiritual city. Paradise.

163. the deathless passion. Her spiritual aspiration; her devotion to the pure and good.

168. Merlin. An enchanter or magician of King Arthur's Court.

172. The Siege Perilous. The perilous seat (siege).

In the legends of the Holy Grail, "the siege perilous" is the seat in which Christ sat at the Last Supper,—and in which no one who was unworthy might thereafter sit. Tennyson in a note says that the siege perilous "stands for the spiritual imagination." Merlin and Galahad "lost" themselves in two different senses of the word. Merlin allowed his imagination to dwell on evil things until they overmastered him; and thus he "lost himself". Galahad, on the other hand, suppressed all selfish desires, and in this sense "lost himself." As a result, his better and purer self triumphed and he "found himself."

180. lay. Lay spread.

183. riving. Tearing or splitting asunder.

200. cousin. Here means "kinsman" Bors was Lancelot's nephew.

209. Crying on help. Crying for help.

218. under Camelot. Camelot was built on a hill (ll. 227-31).

225. our mighty hall. The description of the hall which follows, is symbolic. The hall itself represents man's spiritual possessions, all that ministers to his spiritual life, in the midst of which dwells the soul.

226. These possessions have been built up by the intellectual powers of man, represented by Merlin, as the dwelling place of the soul, represented by Arthur.

232. The zones, or belts, of sculpture which gird the edifice are the four stages of human progress. In the first stage man is in a state of savagery, a prey to the lower passions; in the second, he has gained control over his bestial instincts; in the third, he has reached maturity and is ready to fight for the right; and in the fourth, he aspires towards spiritual ideals.

233. mystic. Having a secret religious meaning.

238-9. The ideal human being as the mind conceives him to be.

240. His aspirations, represented by the wings, are guided by duty, represented by the northern star.

241. eastward. So as to catch the rays of divine wisdom, which are in turn reflected to the people "in far fields" below.

249-50. It is only through conflict, represented by the "twelve great battles," that the soul gains insight.

253. The two windows represent the beginning and ending of Arthur's (the soul's) career.

Excalibur. Arthur's sword; the name literally means "cut-steel."

255. On this window would be pictured (blazoned) the scene from *Morte d'Arthur*, in which Excalibur is cast away.

263. The golden dragon. The dragon was the symbol of sovereignty among the Celtic kings, and King Arthur wore it as a crest.

264. the hold. The bandit stronghold.

270. protesting. This may mean either, protesting against the foolishness of the quest; or, protesting their eagerness to go.

287. A reference to *Matthew* XI, 7: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?" The king thinks that they are foolish to follow a mere shadow.

289. Shrilling. Crying in a shrill, eager voice.

297. Arthur sees that the quest for the Holy Grail will help to bring ruin to the Round Table, since many of his knights will be lost in the search for it.

298-301. **The king says that many of his knights will undertake the quest, not because they have any spiritual fitness for it, but merely because others, such as Sir Galahad, have done so. Because Taliessin is a great singer, or bard, there are many who try to imitate him, although they have no gift of song.** Taliessin was a Celtic bard who is supposed to have lived about 500 A.D.

305. **overborne by one.** Overcome by one knight, whereas Lancelot "hath overborne five knights at once."

310. To subdue sudden and violent uprisings.

312. **White Horse.** The white horse was the emblem of the English, or Saxons.

318. **This chance.** The opportunity of redressing the wrongs of which he has just spoken (ll.314-5).

319. **wandering fires.** Like one who follows the *ignis fatuus*, or will-o'-the wisp.

324. **gracious pastime.** Tournaments in which they would delight.

336. **heat.** Enthusiasm.

346. **galleries.** Long balconies supported upon figures of dragons projecting from the walls.

347. **crazy.** Crumbling with age.

350. **wyvern.** Two legged dragons, carved from the projecting stone.

griffin. A fabulous creature with the body of a lion and the head of an eagle.

358. **the Gate of the Three Queens.** Described in detail in *Gareth and Lynette* ll. 209-26.

359. **rendered mystically.** Pictured in symbols.

362. **lists.** Field of the tournament. The lists are literally the barriers surrounding the field.

370. **a driving gloom.** A dark cloud driven across the sky.

376-7. In his mood of despair the world seems barren and he longs (thirsts) for something that will give him true satisfaction.

380. **lawns.** Grassy spaces.

381. **crisping.** The curling edge of the wave.

383. took. Pleased.

389-90. The gratification of the sensual appetite brings no satisfaction.

396-400. Domestic happiness, with home and children, fails to satisfy him. Death comes to the home, and the house itself falls into ruin.

402-20. Neither wealth nor the glory which it brings can content him.

402. a yellow gleam. The gleam of gold.

404-6. The labourer worships wealth.

409-10. Glory is here personified.

411. casque. Helmet.

415-7. He is at first dazzled and filled with fear, but is afterwards attracted by "the splendour".

421-36. Sir Percivale becomes ambitious for worldly fame. He climbs higher and higher in the political world. The crowd are ready to welcome him as their ruler. But alas! ambition achieved brings no satisfaction. People and cities alike pass away; and even if any of the former generation do survive a little longer, (l. 431) they have forgotten their benefactor.

423. incredible. Incredibly high.

427. clomb. Climbed; an archaic form.

441. Low as the hill was high. His humiliation was as great now as his ambition and pride had been before.

444. phantoms. The visions of the unreal things which had fallen into dust.

448. His mortal change. His change into the form of man, who is mortal.

449. she. Humility.

453. The Wise Men of the East, the Magi, humbled themselves before the infant Christ.

455. thy prowess and thy sins. A reference to ll. 361-78. Even in thinking of his sins, he did not forget himself. The man who is truly humble does not stop to contemplate his good and evil deeds, but prostrates himself in utter self-abasement.

461. The hermit showed him that his longings could be satisfied only by the things of the spirit.

462. sacring. The ceremony of consecrating the bread and wine (the holy elements).

465. shrine. Altar.

466-7. To Sir Galahad the holy bread stood for the Christ child.

and went. The image disappeared.

473. blacken'd. By the darkness.

468-81. Read Tennyson's *Sir Galahad* and compare it with this passage.

478. Pagan. Literally, a villager, because the outlying villages did not become Christian so soon as the towns and cities. Compare the derivation of the word "heathen."

482-7. See ll. 161-5.

489. a hill. The hill of spiritual progress through conflict. See *Rugby Chapel*, ll. 86-101.

499. swamp. The valley of Death.

501-7. To the ancients the valley of Death could be crossed only by a bridge of pure thoughts and good deeds. The pure Sir Galahad, who had led a sinless life, could cross on such a bridge; but he could not return, and Sir Percivale could not follow him.

501. some ancient king. Perhaps David.

502. bridge. Arch, span.

503. the great sea. Eternity; "the boundless deep".

507-8. Note what Sir Percivale saw each time that the heavens opened (ll. 509, 516 and 523).

509. "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." *Job*, 38:7.

513. samite. A rich silk material.

525. Down on the waste. Hanging low over the waters of the great sea.

526-7. See *Revelations*, XXI:10-27, for a description of "the spiritual city."

527. in a glory. In a glow of light, surrounded as with a halo.

528. the goal of all the saints. The dwelling place of all the saints, after death.

529. Strike from the sea. Stand out sharply against the sea.

533-9. These lines form an admirable transition from the ecstatic vision of Sir Percivale to the commonplace realities of every day life of which Ambrosius speaks.

534. the deathful ridge. The hill described in ll. 489-92.

538. no phantom. Such as those already mentioned (ll. 379-439). He had seen the Holy Grail and had no desire to seek for spiritual satisfaction in earthly things.

539. See ll. 318-9.

540-63. The speech of Ambrosius is delightful in its naïvete and simplicity. The simple monk, with mind full of the petty concerns of the village, and yet all absorbed in Percivale's tale, rambles on in homely colloquial fashion from one trifle to another, and then suddenly realizing that he has got away from his question, breaks off abruptly in the middle of his sentence.

540. ask'd Ambrosius. It takes the simple monk a long time to complete his question (ll. 561-3).

541. These ancient books. See l. 59.

win thee. Interest you, please you.

541-3. teem with miracles. Are full of stories of miraculous and marvellous deeds.

545. Who cannot read any book easily except my prayer-book (breviary).

547. thorpe. Village.

548-9. The village lies so close to the walls of the monastery that it reminds him of a swallow's (martin's) nest of clay, built under the eaves of the house.

554. lyings-in. At the birth of children.

555. children of the place. Local humour, relating to the life of the village.

557-9. Or making peace when disputes chance to arise amid the bargainings (chafferings) and idle talk (chatterings) of the market place, I rejoice, small man that I am, in this small world of mine. "Chafferings" and "chatterings" are in opposition to "squabbles".

558. **market-cross.** Usually a stone structure surmounted by a cross, set up in the market place.

570. **eft.** Newt, a small lizard.

575. **Thither I made.** I made my way to it.

602. Pleading with me on bended knee.

607. **O me, my brother!** The memory of his anguish as he "rose and fled" calls forth this exclamation.

613. **yule.** Christmas.

615. **And this am I.** And I am content.

Percivale has just said that he "cared not for anything on earth," and Ambrosius pleads half-pathetically for a little affection: "Just as a poor man must be content on a cold Christmas Day, to sit by a small fire, so I will be content if you care for me ever so little".

624. **want.** Lack.

625-6. We who dream that in married life (a life so rich) there must be something surprisingly sweet (sweet beyond all sweetness).

627. **too earthly wise.** In too worldly a fashion.

629. **earth.** The burrow in which the badger lives.

630-1. In spite of fasting and doing penance, Ambrosius sees no visions, but is, instead, occupied with the duties and cares of everyday life.

635. **pelican.** A large web-footed bird with an enormous pouch attached to the lower side of the bill. According to an old belief, the pelican gives its own life-blood as food for its young when threatened with death from hunger. The pelican is therefore a symbol of self-sacrifice, and in this case it symbolizes the devotion of Sir Bors to Lancelot.

641. **maddening what he rode.** Driving his horse to a frenzy of madness.

644-5. A reference to *Proverbs*, XXVI,13: "The slothful man says, there is a lion in the way." Lancelot knows that he has been a sluggard in not casting aside his sin, and now he fears that his sin, like a lion in the path, may spring upon him and overcome him.

649. **his former madness.** Guinevere had been jealous of Lancelot, and because of her reproaches madness had come upon him which lasted for two years.

660. **with small adventure met.** Having met with little adventure.

663-4. The Celts in the remote corners of the realm had not become Christianised, but still held to the religion of the Druids.

664. **Paynim.** Pagan; and archaic form of the word.

their circles. At Stonehenge and other places there are Druid remains consisting of circles of large stones placed on end.

665. **pitch up.** Set upright; fix in an upright position. "To pitch" is, literally, to fix a stake or other sharp-pointed object in the ground.

668. **simple.** Foolish.

670. **What other fire than he.** What other fire can there be than the fire of the sun?

678. **hollow-ringing.** The hollow sound of the wind sweeping by.

682. **scud.** Flying clouds.

684-6. The seven bright stars which form the group variously known as the Dipper, the Plough, the Waggon (or Wain), and the Great Bear, are always visible in the sky, and the circle which they describe in revolving about the North Star might easily call to mind the Round Table.

689-96. The Grail appeared to Sir Bors because in his unselfish devotion to Lancelot he had "lost himself to find himself."

700. **Sir Bors it was.** See l. 40.

703-5. **his eyes . . his lips.** An indication of sincerity when the eyes light up at the same time that the lips smile.

705. **a cloud.** Sir Bors was sad although he smiled.

709. **sooth.** Truth.

714-5. Do not go in at one ear and out the other, but are treasured in the memory.

717. **heaps of ruin.** The result of the fierce gale mentioned in l. 729. The stone carvings of the unicorns and other fabulous creatures lie broken in the streets.

unicorn. A fabulous beast with the head of a horse and the body of a lion, and with a single horn projecting from the forehead.

718. **basilisk.** A fabulous serpent with a crest resembling a crown, and with a dragon's head on the end of the tail. Its breath or its glance were supposed to be fatal.

cockatrice. A winged serpent.

719. **talbots.** Large hunting dogs.

720. **Raw.** Fresh in colour, not weathered.

721. **dais-throne.** Throne on the raised platform at the end of the hall.

726-7. The expression of your eye shows that you have fared well and proves that our fears that you had met with some disaster were groundless.

728. **flooding ford.** Streams made impassable because of floods.

729. **So fierce a gale.** The same gale, no doubt, that brought the vision of the Grail to Sir Percivale and Sir Bors.

729-33. Old traditions and superstitions have been shattered and even the newer beliefs and ideals have been shaken.

738. **the quiet life.** See l. 4.

740. **Gawain.** Sir Gawain is a nephew of King Arthur; and in the older Arthurian romances he is respresented as a courteous and chivalrous knight, scarcely less zealous in his pursuit of the Grail than Sir Percivale himself. In Tennyson's *Idylls*, however, his character is degraded; and though he is represented as a knight of great skill and courage, he is given over to the pursuit of pleasure and is lacking in seriousness of purpose.

745. **pavilion.** Tent.

747. **tenting-pin.** The stake to which the guy-ropes are fastened.

759. **tears.** Because Lancelot had not seen it truly.

762-3. See *John* II:1-10. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, after Jesus had changed the water into wine the Governor of the feast, not knowing of the miracle, called the bridegroom and said: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

769. **if friend of thine I be.** Lancelot knew that he had been unfaithful to the king and that he did not deserve the name of friend.

772. **a sin.** His love of Guinevere.

782. **save . . . asunder.** Unless I should first cast away my sin.

785-852. The story of Lancelot's quest is symbolic, but there is danger that in trying to find a spiritual meaning for every detail, the beauty of the imagery may be lost. In general, however, the passage is intended to portray the struggle of a sinful man to throw aside his sin and attain to a state of spiritual purity.

787. His distraction of mind (madness) is the result of his inner conflict, his struggle to put aside his sin.

789. Because of his conflicting emotions his strength was sapped. He was a prey to every chance desire.

792-4. His unsuccessful struggle to free himself from his sin is followed by a state of despondency (the naked shore, with wide flats and coarse grasses).

795-809. He rouses himself to serious struggle (the storm) and he is driven hither and thither by conflicting passions.

802. **blackening.** Looking black.

805. It is because Lancelot, in his anguish of spirit, is willing "to lose himself" that he is granted a partial vision of the Grail.

809. Because the moon and stars are so far distant from us in space their relative position towards us does not change, and so they seem to move with us, and not in the opposite direction from us.

811. **shingle.** Coarse gravel on the shore.

813. **Carbonek.** According to the old legends Carbonek was an enchanted castle, built as a resting-place for the Holy Grail. In this connection it probably symbolizes the Church.

815. **chasm-like.** As if they were openings in the rocky cliffs.

820. **sudden-flaring.** Bristling up suddenly, like a flame that flares up of a sudden.

821-6. Doubts and difficulties (the lions) that beset the path can be safely passed only by faith. They cannot be fought with other weapons.

827. **sounding.** Echoing loudly to the sound of his footsteps.

828-31. The empty hall suggests retirement from the world for prayer and meditation; and the moon shining on the rolling sea symbolizes the peace of mind that follows.

831. oriel. A richly ornamented projecting window.

834. The voice of hope from the eastern tower, fronting the sun.

835-7. up I climb'd . . . for ever. Progress towards spiritual perfection is slow and painful.

841. essay'd. Attempted to force.

842-5. Because Lancelot has failed to put away his sin, he "sees it as holy wrath and fire, as swift and stern condemnation," not in the sweet and gentle form in which it appeared to Percivale's sister and to Sir Galahad.

847. pall'd. Enveloped.

crimson samite. Only to those who were wholly free from sin did the Grail appear "clothed in white samite."

858. Ambrosius gives a sign that he wishes to hear.

863. our mightiest. Sir Lancelot.

865. the blue-eyed cat. Albino cats with blue eyes are generally deaf.

871. idle vows. As in ll. 864-8.

875-80. Arthur says in effect: "These knights have seen the vision according to their natures, in different ways, and you must not expect them to tell of their experiences in the same way. In olden times the prophets and bards could utter God's messages only through the imperfect means at their command. God uses us as we are, with our different experiences and our human imperfections, to give utterance to his music."

879. the framework and the chord. The stringed instrument.

894. a lean Order. Few of his knights are left to right human wrongs and uphold the ideals of the Round Table.

905. The king's ideal of true living is to give the first place to the performance of the humble, commonplace duties of everyday life. He does not despise visions, but the time for them is when the day's work is over. His mind, indeed, is filled with visions,—and there are times when the material world itself seems nothing but a vision, and God, Christ, and the soul, the only things that are real.

920. Sir Percivale could not understand a conception of life that

put the commonplace duties of everyday life first, and glorified them. To him the highest type of spiritual life was symbolized in the search for the Holy Grail, even though it was a selfish quest. But the king's ideal, as we see it, was a nobler type than Sir Percivale's.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tennyson might have told the story of *The Holy Grail* in the third person, in his own words. What advantage is there in having it take the form of a conversation between Ambrosius and Sir Percivale?

2. What is Sir Percivale's attitude towards earthly love, as expressed in ll. 30-37, and elsewhere in the poem?

3. "One of your own knights, a guest of ours" (l. 40). Who was this knight? Why did he speak "with sadness and so low"? What does Ambrosius say elsewhere about his appearance?

4. (a) Sir Percivale explains to Ambrosius what the Holy Grail is. Tell, in your own words, what he says.
   (b) In what form did the Grail appear to Percivale's sister, to Galahad, to Percivale, to Bors, to Lancelot?

5. At what different points in the poem is reference made to the sin that had corrupted the Round Table?

6. (a) How did it come to pass that Percivale's sister saw the Holy Grail?
   (b) How do you explain her actions with respect to Galahad?

7. (a) Why is Galahad represented as moving "in white armour"?
   (b) "His eyes become so like her own." Explain.

8. (a) What is "The Siege perilous"?
   (b) Explain Galahad's words, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

9. In the description of Camelot, explain the significance of the four great zones, the statue, the twelve great windows, the blank window.

10. Why did Arthur disapprove of the Quest? Show in what respects his disapproval was justified by the results.

11. "Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the king, "for such as thou art is the vision, not for these." What did the king mean?

12. Why is it necessary to speak of the tournament (ll. 322-37) in telling the story?

13. (a) "For all my blood danced in me, and I knew that I should light upon the Holy Grail" (ll. 366-7). There is a touch of dramatic irony here. Explain.

(b) "I was thirsty even unto death" (l. 377). What does he mean?

(c) "For what is this thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?" (ll. 54-5). Why "thy sins"?

14. In ll. 379-439, what different things "fell into dust"? Show the allegorical meaning in each case.

15. (a) The Holy Grail is with Galahad all the time, moving with him night and day. What is the significance of this?

(b) What effect has the presence of the Holy Grail upon him? Read the first stanza of Tennyson's *Sir Galahad*.

16. Explain the "hill" (l. 489), the "swamp" (l. 499), the "great sea" (l. 503).

17. (a) How was it that Sir Precivale was at last vouchsafed a vision of the Grail?

(b) How did Sir Percivale's vision differ from that of his sister?

18. Explain the significance of the incident narrated in ll. 564-610.

19. "The questions which Ambrosius asks, and his comments on Sir Percivale's narrative, show that he is very human in his interests." Show that this is true, by reference to the poem.

20. How did it come to pass that Sir Bors saw the Vision? What evidences are there throughout the poem, of his humility and modesty?

21. On what different occasions is Gawain mentioned in the poem? Since he did not seriously follow the Quest, why is he introduced into the poem at all?

22. "So fierce a gale made havoc here of late" (l. 729). Show how this storm (or others) affected the quest of Sir Percivale, Sir Bors, Sir Lancelot, and Sir Gawain.

23. (a) Why did Lancelot, as compared with Galahad, have such a struggle in his efforts to find the Holy Grail?

(b) Why was the Grail "veiled and covered" when he saw it?

24. What references are contained in the poem, to the Druids? to the Saxons? to the fact that Arthur was a Celtic king?

25. "So spake the King. I knew not all he meant" (l. 920). Show by reference to the poem the difference between King Arthur's point of view and Sir Percivale's.